

Baiting Deer and Elk

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Background

- **Commission requested deer and elk baiting be part of the 3-year package discussion**
- **The topic was presented before the public at public meetings last summer**
- **Input received through website comments**
- **Random survey asked deer and elk hunters about baiting**
- **Over 1,600 comments received when proposed seasons were filed**

Input

In the non-random input received through the Department's website:

- **Favored no change to the rule- 63%**
- **Favored a ban on baiting for deer and elk but not including agricultural operations- 15%**
- **Favored a ban on baiting for deer and elk imposed on guides/outfitters and include a limit on the amount of bait allowed- 14%**
- **Favored a ban on baiting for deer and elk- 8%**

Input continued

In the random telephone survey of deer and elk hunters:

- **59% of deer hunters opposed or strongly opposed baiting.**
- **21% of deer hunters supported or strongly supported baiting, and**
- **21% of deer hunters were neutral or had no opinion**
- **68% of elk hunters opposed or strongly opposed baiting**
- **14% of elk hunters supported or strongly supported baiting, and**
- **19% of elk hunters were neutral or had no opinion**

Input continued

The comments received during the comment period in response to the filing of the CR102 were:

- 86.7% of the people commenting were against one or all of the proposed new restrictions and preferred status quo**
- 5.7% of those commenting were somewhat in favor of one or more of the proposed new restrictions if they could be modified or more limited in a variety of fashions**
- 7.5% of those commenting were in favor of one or more of the proposed new restrictions**

Input From Enforcement

WAC 232-12-078:

- Although the intent is a complete ban, an exemption for baiting in firearm restricted areas and urban growth areas would concentrate harvest and aid public safety.

WAC 232-12-079 and WAC 232-12-088

- The 10 gallon limit would problematic to enforce.
 - Difficult to tell whether bait volume constitutes a violation (*"are we going to issue two 5 gallon buckets to each officer to measure volume?"*).
 - Measuring volume is currently an issue for littering on department lands with the amounts specified in those rules dictating the severity of the violation (less than or equal to one cubic foot = infraction; more than one cubic foot and up to one cubic yard = misdemeanor; more than one cubic yard = gross misdemeanor).
- The 10 gallon limit may also present challenges for prosecution of offenses as defendants can call into question whether they actually had 10 gallons of bait. This will be a proof issue.
- Concerns with potential issues with going onto private land to check bait rather than going onto private land to check licenses and tags. Could also create unnecessary conflicts with landowners.

Game Management Advisory Council

- GMAC discussed baiting at both their December 6, and March 7, meetings
- Very thorough back and forth discussion about the pluses and minuses of baiting
- *"In the absence of WDFW finding a biological reason to make a recommendation, GMAC is recommending that the Commission does not adopt changes to existing deer and elk baiting rules for the following reasons:*
 - *Effects on archer success rates - Allocation issues*
 - *Impacts to hunter retention/recruitment*
 - *Enforceability*
 - *Effects on selectivity"*
- **Vote was 17 yea; 0 nay; 1 abstain**

Against Baiting

In the public meeting setting and the written public comment received, those not in favor of using bait to hunt deer and elk cited:

- **Reasons of fair chase**
- **Unfair advantages over hunters that don't use bait**
- **Concentrating animals in places where neighbors don't want them**
- **Luring animals away from land that was formerly perceived as better hunting**
- **The potential for spreading disease**
- **The potential for negative impacts to habitat by congregating animals**

In Favor of Baiting

Those in favor of using bait to hunt deer and elk cited:

- **Being more selective in their harvest**
- **The ability to lure animals out of security cover that is impossible to move through**
- **Being able to hunt smaller acreages successfully**
- **Improving the probability of a clean kill**
- **Reducing their risk of wounding or losing animals**
- **Enhancing the hunting experience of a youth hunter or first-time hunter**
- **Facilitating a hunting experience for a senior hunter or hunter with disability that would otherwise be unable to hunt**
- **Don't unnecessarily restrict my hunting**

Social Issue

Possible policy options for the Commission to consider:

- 1) No change, status quo**
- 2) A limit on the amount of bait that can be used to hunt deer and elk; new WAC 232-12-079**
- 3) A restriction on baiting with exceptions for youth, senior, disabled, and urban interface lands with landowner permission with an additional limit on amount of bait allowed; new WAC 232-12-088**
- 4) A complete ban on baiting for hunting deer and elk not including agricultural operations; new WAC 232-12-078**

Questions

